

Around the House



NEWS FROM THE HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA): Stimulating the Local Economy

By now you have heard about the Stimulus Program which the President and Congress are hoping will help our economy recover. One of the most popular programs was the "Cash for Clunkers". However there are many Stimulus programs funded by the ARRA, soon to be underway in Wichita.

The Housing and Community Services Department will receive \$1.1M for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). This program will assist families who are facing homelessness by providing assistance to keep them in their housing. It will also help families who are homeless, to find housing and become stabilized. (When we say families, that includes individual persons also). The program will start sometime in October. Persons needing assistance will need to call 2-1-1 to determine if they qualify. An announcement will be made when the phone line will be open for HPRP calls.

The other program the Housing and Community Services Department will administer is called CDBG-R. This is a special allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds which will be used for sidewalk improvements in low-moderate income neighborhoods and for façade improvements for neighborhood businesses. The total amount of this allocation is \$764,126.

The Wichita Housing Authority is also receiving a special allocation of \$1.2M in Capital Funds, for property improvements. Plans are underway to utilize these funds to upgrade the heating systems in the single family properties. This will make them more effective and energy efficient.

Other City departments will also receive funding for various social service and construction projects. The Career Development Office will receive funds which will be used for clearing away trees and brush from properties, and scheduling and paying for bulky item trash pick ups to improve the neighborhood conditions.

The Police Department will also receive funds for officers and equipment. The Airport will be able to replace a fire/rescue vehicle. Other City vehicles will be replaced also, including fire trucks, heavy duty trucks and transit vans. The equipments/vehicle purchases will improve efficiency and reduce emissions.

One of the goals of the Stimulus program is to provide or retain jobs in the community. The City's projects will do that by providing construction jobs for a number of projects. In addition the Workforce Alliance received funds this spring, for a summer youth employment program which made jobs available for a number of youth and young adults.

Energy conservation and efficiency projects are also being implemented by the South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD) which is providing funds to upgrade heating and cooling systems in homes of eligible persons, as well as increased insulation and installation of energy efficient appliances. If you want to follow the progress of local Stimulus funding you can visit the City of Wichita website at www.wichita.gov or the federal website at www.recovery.gov.

October 4-10 Is Fire Prevention Week Here's A TIP!



Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

Inside this issue:

FROM THE DIRECTOR	2
HOUSING AUTHORITY ANNUAL PLAN	2
HOUSING VOUCHER RECERTIFICATIONS	3
HAP SCHEDULE	3
LANDLORD NOTE	4
STAY FIRE SMART: DON'T GET BURNED!	4

Around the House

From the Director



Mary K. Vaughn invites readers to submit questions related to department programs for a new feature: **Ask the Director!**

This newsletter includes references to 2009 Fire Prevention Week in October and also includes tips on “staying fire smart” to avoid getting burned. One subject that always comes up in fire prevention discussions, is smoking, which is the leading cause of fire deaths in the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently sent a notice to housing authorities, encouraging them to establish non-smoking policies in some or all of their public housing units. HUD is focused on the

health effects of smoking and inhaling second-hand smoke.

Your Wichita Housing Authority takes the HUD recommendation very seriously from safety and health perspectives and we are looking at non-smoking policy options. However we know that we have many tenants who choose to smoke cigarettes, pipes or cigars. Therefore we have been reluctant to establish a policy.

I would like to know what you think. Should we have a non-smoking policy? If so,

should it be applied to all public housing units? If not, which ones should be non-smoking? Changes like this don't happen overnight and should be well-thought out. That is why I am asking for your input. You can send me a letter or an email with your ideas.

This does not impact Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders but you should consider the danger and health effects of smoking on your own.

Mary K. Vaughn

SMOKING FIRE SAFETY TIP

If you smoke, smoke outside and use deep, wide ashtrays on a sturdy table.

Housing Authority Annual Plan

The *Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998* (QHWRA) requires public housing authorities to prepare a five-year plan showing the needs and goals for that period, update it every five years, and prepare a more detailed annual operating plan. The annual plan must include, among other things, information on local housing needs, population served, method of rent determination, operations, capital improve-

ments, unmet housing needs of low-moderate income families and efforts to coordinate the program with local welfare agencies. These plans include administrative policies and anticipated subsidies for both Section 8 and Public Housing Programs.

The QHWRA requires the board of directors of housing authorities to conduct a public hearing to discuss the housing authority plans and to invite

public comment regarding the plans. In the event that the board receives public comment, written or oral, which is deemed significant enough to amend the plans, the board may amend the plans and certify the plans as amended.

The 2010 Annual Plan has no policy or procedures changes from the 2009 Annual Plan. The 5-year and 2010 Annual Plans will be available for public inspection at 332 N. Riverview or at www.wichita.gov/CityOffices/Housing. Written comments regarding the Plans can be mailed to 332 N. Riverview, Wichita, KS 67203 and must be received by October 2, 2009. The public hearing will be held in the City Council Chambers at 455 N. Main, following the City Council Meeting which starts at 9:00 a.m. on October 13, 2009.



Our Employee Values

- ◆ Respectfully helping others achieve safe, affordable housing
- ◆ Empowering people and improving neighborhoods
- ◆ Making a difference—right where people live
- ◆ Investing in people with their housing needs

Employee News!

The Housing and Community Services Department is filled with employees who embody our values. One such person is Leon Salazar who recently assisted someone from Spain who was trying to locate a family member in Wichita.

We received an email from someone who said they were trying to find their relatives and the address and phone number they had were not working. Leon

was asked to try to call the local family using another phone number we found online. When that didn't work, he drove to the address, talked with neighbors and learned where the family had moved. He then drove to that location and got contact information which was shared with the family in Spain via email. The family reported later that they were reunited!



Voucher Holders—Let's Talk Recertifications!

Mandatory Meeting

Every participant on the Shelter Plus Care/Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is required to cooperate with the Annual Recertification process.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the Annual Recertification meeting is to give the Wichita Housing Authority an opportunity to review each family's eligibility for continued rental assistance. Staff will establish the new rent amount for the upcoming anniversary month and year, and will inform families of changes in program policies, procedures, and continued program eligibility requirements.

Receipt of the Recertification Package

The Annual Recertification package will be mailed to you two weeks prior to your scheduled meeting, and will include the meeting date and time.

Preparation for the Recertification Meeting

You are required to attend and be prepared for your Annual Recertification meeting. Immediately after you receive your package, you should start gathering the necessary paperwork: check stubs, social security print outs, other proofs of income, bank statements, proof of child care, and medical expenses. You must make copies of the above documents; no copying will be made off site. All documents should not be more than 30 days old. You must arrive on time and have your package fully completed, including the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA). You must contact your landlord as soon as possible to allow the RFTA to be completed before your recertification meeting.

Appointment Schedule Conflicts

If you have a schedule conflict regarding your Annual Recertification and your Annual Inspection, please remember that you can identify any person 18 or older to represent you for the annual inspection. You should immediately notify your employer of your Annual Recertification appointment, to allow for a change in your work schedule. Your Annual Recertification is critical!

No Annual Recertification—Grounds for Termination

If you are unable to attend the Annual Recertification meeting, you must notify your worker at least 48 hours before the meeting, unless there is an emergency. You will be asked to explain why you are unable to attend the meeting. The Housing Specialist will determine if you need to attend the scheduled meeting, attend another meeting, or to mail -in your Recertification package. You have five days from the original or re-scheduled Annual Recertification meeting date to get your completed package into the Section 8 office. If you fail to meet this deadline, you will be sent a termination letter. **It is important to complete your recertification timely to avoid losing your rental assistance.**

Landlord Request for An Increase

During your Annual Recertification, your landlord can request a rent increase. If you plan to move, please notify your landlord. If you agree to an increase, you must agree to a new lease. The landlord must provide you and the Wichita Housing Authority with a copy of the lease at least 60 days prior to the effective date of the rent increase.

I Want To Move

The Shelter Plus Care/Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Programs only allow families to move once a year. During your Annual Recertification meeting, the Housing Specialist will ask families who want to move, to complete an "I Want to Move" form. A Relocation meeting will be held for those families at a later date.

More Questions

If you have additional questions please contact your Housing Specialist.

Family Self-Sufficiency
Workshop
Atwater Neighborhood
City Hall
2755 E 19th
6:00 pm

September 10
September 29
October 15

Section 8 Homeowners
Alumni Meeting
Atwater Neighborhood
City Hall
2755 E 19th
5:30 pm

October 19

CHILD FIRE

SAFETY TIP

**Never leave
matches or lighters
in a bedroom or
any place where
children may go
without
supervision.**



Don't forget to sign up for direct deposit of Housing Assistance Payments for fast access to your funds! Go to www.wichita.gov and click on the Finance Department. From there you will see a link for Automated Clearinghouse (ACH). Click there and follow the 3 simple steps.

HAP Payment Schedule

MONTH	CHECK MAIL DATE
October, 2009	September 28, 2009
November, 2009	October 30, 2009
December, 2009	November 30, 2009

NOTE: Even though we try hard to maintain this schedule, there are times when circumstances beyond our control cause delays, such as recent breakdowns of the City's mail machine. This is one more reason to sign up for Direct Deposit!

Mission .. To provide housing & related services to benefit the citizens & neighborhoods of Wichita

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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We're On the Web!
www.wichita.gov/cityoffices/housing

LANDLORDS NOTE!

Between November 1, 2009 and May 31, 2010, the Section 8 Inclement Weather Policy for exterior paint problems, will be in effect. Current landlords will be approved for extensions to correct exterior paint deficiencies only during this time. Exterior extensions apply only to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental units already in the program and will not apply to initial preoccupancy inspections. So take advantage of the great fall weather and assess the exterior of your property, and make necessary repairs now. Early intervention is good business!



"Reproduced from NFPA's Fire Prevention Week Web site, www.firepreventionweek.org. ©2009

Each year the Housing and Community Services Department reminds our customers of the importance of fire safety. This year is no exception. Fire Safety Week is October 4-10, 2009 the theme is:

Stay Fire Smart! Don't Get Burned

The focus is on burn awareness and prevention. According to the National Fire Prevention Association:

Testing the water before putting a child in the bath may sound like common sense. Wearing short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking

on the stovetop may show foresight. This and other simple actions may be all it takes to prevent devastating burns.

Following are some fire facts which indicate the importance of "Staying Fire Smart".

- In 2007, U.S. fire departments responded to 399,000 home fires. These fires killed almost 2,900 people. Eighty-four percent of all fire deaths resulted from home fires.
- Someone was injured in a home fire every 39 minutes and roughly eight people died in home fires every day during 2007.
- A fire department responded to a home fire every 79 seconds.
- Sixty-three percent of reported home fire deaths happened in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.
- About 1/3 of home fires and deaths happened in the months of December, January and February.
- Cooking continued to be the leading cause of home fires and injuries followed by heating, electrical and intentional fires.
- Smoking materials caused one of every four home fire deaths.
- The kitchen is the leading area of origin for home fires. However, bedrooms and living/family rooms are the leading areas of origin for home fire deaths.